**Sermon 1 Samuel 3:1-20 & John 1:43-51**

**Sermon Video Link:** [**https://youtu.be/L-t0CtMju-w**](https://youtu.be/L-t0CtMju-w)

Have you ever heard God speaking to you?

When you read the Bible, you might get the impression that God used to communicate much more with people in the past. When you take a closer look, you find that there were many long periods when the word of the Lord was rare and there were no visions from God. We hear about one such time today.

God’s people had been in the promised land for over 300 years. During this time, they had no king and no temple, with worship and offerings being conducted in the Tent of Meeting. God’s people kept forgetting about God, and often ending up weak and threatened by their enemies. God continually raised up people referred to as judges who were often military leaders who sorted out the mess the people had made for themselves. Apart from the judges the other main authority figures were a continuing succession of priests serving in the Tent of Meeting.

At the end of this period even the priests in the temple were forgetting about God. Eli the priest had two sons, young men who showed contempt for God. By their actions they constantly blasphemed God. When people brought their sacrifices to the Tent of Meeting, the sons forcibly took for themselves the choicest meat from the offerings. These portions were meant to be reserved exclusively for God. They also slept with the women who were serving at the Tent of Meeting. Meanwhile Eli, knowing what they were doing was wrong, turned a blind eye to it.

Things were not good in the Promised Land and the word of the Lord was rare, and there are not many visions (1 Samuel 3:1).

We too may see some similarities with our own time. We certainly seem to be living in a time when the word of the Lord is rare and there aren’t many visions. We also seem to be living in a time when many people are turning from the faith. In that past decade or two we have heard of far too many people called to serve God who show contempt for God and use their authority to harm others and serve their own self interests and desires.

We live at a time when many people have lost faith in God and respect for the church and its leaders. We are sorely in need of a word from God.

In the promised land when things were a mess and the word of the Lord was rare, the young boy Samuel was under the care and training of Eli the priest. Samuel was still too young to know much about God. One night while they were both sleeping in in the Tent of Meeting, Samuel heard someone call his name, “Samuel!” Thinking it was Eli he ran to him saying, “Here I am; you called me.” (vs 5, NIV). At first Eli doesn’t realise what is going on either. After all, the word of the Lord was rare and when something is rare you may look for another explanation. Three times the voice calls and three times Samuel runs to Eli.

Eventually after the third time Samuel wakes Eli, he realises what is happening, the Lord is calling Samuel. He says to the boy, ‘”’Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, “Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.”’ (1 Sam 3:9, NIV). This time when the Lord calls Samuel, the boy says, “‘Speak, for your servant is listening.’” (vs 10, NIV).

This is the beginning of Samuel’s call as a prophet, and we are told that the Lord continued to appear to Samuel as he grew up and the Lord gave power to whatever Samuel said and did not let any of Samuel’s words fall to the ground. Once again, the word of God was plentiful.

Have you ever heard God speaking to you? Have you ever heard God’s call?

Over a thousand years after Samuel, there was another time when the word of the Lord was rare and there were not many visions. Once again the time was right for the Lord to speak, and the visions started again. The Lord spoke to Zechariah, and a young woman called Mary and a man named Joseph.

Then the Lord was conceived in the woman and became a human being.

Eventually the Lord, the man Jesus, began speak to people. Ordinary people like Andrew and Simon Peter and Philip and Nathanael. Calling them as he had called Samuel and many others in the past. He called them saying to them, “Follow me!”

Have you heard the Lord speaking to you?

Maybe you have not heard the Lord speaking in an audible voice in the middle of the night, but if you are a disciple of Jesus then you have heard the Lord speak. You have heard the Lord call your name.

Perhaps you first heard the Lord call your name at your Baptism. You may have been too young to understand or remember but if you are baptised, he spoke to you. He called you by name and he adopted you as his dearly beloved child, whom he loves. For many of you that was the first time the Lord invited you to follow him.

God is still speaking to you, today. He speaks to you when you read God’s word, hear God’s word, receive absolution and the body and blood of Christ. God is calling you by name to follow him.

God can speak to us in an audible voice and God can give us dreams and visions, but these are still rare. Instead, God most often speaks to us through people. Through people who have written what God says in the words in the Bible and through people who have been called by name to follow Jesus. The word of God will never again be rare as long as those of us who God has called by name keep telling others what we know about God.

The Lord has called you and today once again the Lord is calling you to follow Jesus, to be a disciple and to speak and be the good news of Jesus in other people’s lives. You don’t have to be a pastor or a prophet. All you need to do is follow Jesus, experience his love, and grace and then tell others about the reason for your hope in him. As you speak, your words won’t fall to the ground, they will be carried by the Holy Spirit into people’s hearts. You may never get to see the results of your words of hope. Your loving acts also won’t fall to the ground because you are doing what the Lord has called you to do, to love God and love your neighbour, and the purposes of God never fail.

The Lord has spoken to you in the past, the Lord continues to speak to you in the present. When you hear the Lord, follow the advice of Eli the priest and say, “Speak, for your servant is listening.

**Amen.**

Pastor Rolf Lungwitz